



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Saturday, 04 September 2021

Subject	Planning Performance Report – April to June 2021
Report of	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
Supporting Officer	Ben Woolnough Planning Manager (Development Management) 01394 444593 Ben.woolnough@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

This report provides an update on the planning performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the timescales for determining planning applications.

Options:

None.

Recommendation/s:

That the content of the report be noted

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

N/A

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

N/A

Environmental:

N/A

Equalities and Diversity:

N/A

Financial:

N/A

Human Resources:

N/A

ICT:

N/A

Legal:

N/A

Risk:

N/A

External Consultees:	None
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
To provide information on the performance of the enforcement section			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	This report provides details on the determination timescales for all planning applications at East Suffolk Council when tested against the government set timescales as well as the East Suffolk Council stretched targets.
1.2	The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reported on a quarterly basis and included within the East Suffolk Council performance report and tested against the Council's Business Plan.

2 Current position	
2.1	The breakdown for Q1 (April 2021 to June 2021) compared with the previous quarter (Q4) is reported as follows:

	Current Quarter		Previous Quarter		Targets
	Q1 Percentage	Q1 Total	Q4 Percentage	Q4 Total	
Major Development	64.29%	9/14	76%	13/17	60% national 65% stretched
Minor Development	72%	92/127	71%	95/133	65% national 75% stretched
Other Development	76%	446/586	89%	465/523	80% national 90% stretched

2.2	The figures for Q1 of the financial year shows a continued high number of application submissions, particularly for other development, at 586 submissions. There remains a trend to issue decisions in a timely manner and the national performance indicators have been met for major and minor development, although there is a slight underperformance in respect of other developments. This slight underperformance is influencing ways in which decision making could be made more efficient, particularly for more straightforward decisions without public interest. A process is underway to trial this and understand how time can be saved, without affecting quality, for officers currently responsible for very high caseloads.
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2.3	All members of the Development Management Team largely continue to work from home but undertake site visits in a Covid secure manner. All office meetings with customers have been held virtually though site meetings are now taking place and the figures presented to Members demonstrates that the pandemic has not had a significant negative effect on either the quality of timeliness of decision making albeit there are a number of challenges which have been faced.
2.4	In January 2021, the team welcomed four new additions to the team who have integrated extremely well and are already making quality decisions for the benefit of our customers. In June 2021 Ben Woolnough replaced Liz Beighton as Planning Manager of the Development Management Team. Since then a number of process and structures have been reviewed and recruitment is currently underway for a new third Principal Planning Officer within the team. This will add significant additional capacity to managing and supporting the team and specifically more timely decision making and improved customer care. A replacement of the Major Sites and Infrastructure role vacated by Ben Woolnough is also out for recruitment.
2.5	The Development Management Team have also been appropriately using the extension of time mechanism to ensure that appropriate discussions can take place with applicants/other parties to secure high quality sustainable developments.
2.6	The Council maintains a high approval rate across all types of applications and proactively look to support development where policy permits and work proactively with applicants and agents to secure appropriate schemes.
2.7	Where applications are refused Officers seek to defend those refusals robustly. Members will note the separate appeals report on the agenda which demonstrates confidence that applications are being refused correctly and those decisions are for the most part upheld at appeal.
2.8	Officers continue to work proactively with agents to promote the pre-application service to seek to ensure that where applications are submitted they have the right level of information accompanying them to enable swift decisions on applications to be made. The Planning Manager is currently engaging with a range of agents to understand their needs and expectations of the team to factor into further improvements.

3 How to address current situation

3.1	Quarterly monitoring
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4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	That the report concerning the performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the speed of determining planning applications is noted.
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Appendices

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

None.
